

9814

THE
JOURNEYINGS
OF THE
ISRAELITES

IMPROVED,

Or an Attempt to spiritualize that important Subject;
shewing the correspondency there is between the Expe-
rience of a true Believer in Christ, and the Travels of
that favoured People.

TO WHICH IS ADDED SOME
PRACTICAL AND EXPERIMENTAL
REMARKS

FROM
JACOB'S VISION OF THE LADDER.

"Knowing brethren beloved, your election of God." 1 Thes. i. 4.

*"He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who
hath also given unto us his holy spirit." Ib. iv. 8.*

ST. I V E S,

PRINTED BY T. BLOOM;

And sold by *J. Buckland*, Pater-Noster-Row; *Vallance &
Conder*, Cheap-side, London; *W. Cowper*, Cambridge;
W. Nicholson, Wisbeach; and the Printer,
St. Ives. 1788.

[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]

THE
JOURNALS
OF THE
ISSUES
IMPROVED

On an Attempt to spiritualize that ancient subject,
showing the correspondence there is between the Expe-
rience of a true Believer in Christ, and the Travels of
that favoured People.

TO WHICH IS ADDED SOME

PRACTICAL EXPERIMENTAL

R E K S



JACOB'S VISION OF THE LADDER

showing the correspondence between the vision of Jacob and the Travels of that favoured People.

By the same Author, who has also published 'The Travels of that favoured People' in 1783.

ST. I. V. 1783

Printed by T. H. B. 1783

Printed by T. H. B. 1783
and the Author's Address is at the
Office of the British Museum, London.

Price of the whole



P R E F A C E.

THE author of the following Treatise was employed some time since in making some remarks upon the Holy Scriptures entirely for his own use, and to assist the memory. He had not long entered upon the work before he found himself in a wide field of meditation. The gracious dealings of God, with his peculiar people, the Hebrews, had such an effect upon his mind, that every page discovered new beauties, and warmly impressed his soul with love to that God, who had (with humility he hoped) brought him out of more than Egyptian slavery. Having written his observations till he came to the giving of the law, he was interrupted by a severe affliction, with which it pleased God to visit him; this, together with his temporal affairs, kept him back from these

A

remarks

remarks for some considerable time. One day as he was reviewing his papers, a friend coming in, made a discovery of some of them, and desired him to proceed; adding at the same time, that he believed the work would be serviceable to the lower class of mankind; and for their sakes chiefly it is committed to the press.

THE author is sensible that there are many imperfections in the work; but when he considers that he does not write for applause, he has no doubt but that the candid reader will excuse such defects, which are more the effects of inability, than prejudice or party spirit. But, however, though the candid and judicious may pass over such imperfections, others of a different stamp will aggravate them. For, notwithstanding, the great profession of christianity which is now made in our land, experimental religion appears to be at a low ebb, even among those who stand high in notions of civil and religious liberty. There are many who deny the operation of the spirit upon the mind of man, and so consequently must be strangers to its effects.

If this small Treatise should fall into the hands of any of this persuasion, it is hoped they will read it impartially. Though the work may appear mean,
the

the author has no mean design in view. Far from confining religion to any party, he has no doubt but there are some of this persuasion, who are real ornaments to the profession they make, and who deserve the esteem of all good men. Yet, on the other hand, it must be allowed, that if this doctrine is maintained, the grand doctrine of the atonement must fall to the ground, man become his own Saviour, and Christ no more than a teacher of morality. However then, we may esteem such worthy characters for their moral excellencies, yet we must beg leave to oppose *those errors*, which, in our opinion, seem to be so dangerous: and while we do it in a spirit of love and meekness, we hope to meet with the like treatment from others, who are of contrary sentiments. Many object to allegorical writing, because some have abused it, and turned the subject into ridicule; yet I cannot see why it should be neglected, if we attempt it in a spirit of meekness and fear, and draw no harsh, or unseemly comparisons. Others abusing the good word of God, is no reason why we should neglect it. It is certain, that the word of God abounds with metaphors and allusions, which, however, some may have abused, to the disgrace of themselves, but not to religion: others have found much comfort and edification from the same; and it is well known, that our blessed Saviour practised much

of this way himself; but references on this head would be altogether needless.

It remains therefore, that if we read the scriptures according to his instructions and example, and no conclusion can be drawn from these figurative parts, no real advantage can arise from the same; and I am sure Jesus Christ never put us upon unnecessary enquiries.—Let the public think as they will upon the following Treatise, the author has no other end in view, than that the scriptures may be read with profit, God honoured, and men everlastingly saved.



5 0059

INTRO



INTRODUCTION.

WHEN the blessed God was pleased to create man, he created him in his own image, and gave him a law, the condition of which was, "Do this, and live," with the following threatening annexed, "The day thou breakest it, thou shalt surely die." Satan, the grand adversary of God and man, soon took the opportunity of tempting our first parents to sin, and became *too* successful in his diabolical attempts: when, alas! they gave way to the infernal seducer, and sinned against God. — The threatening took place immediately, and death spiritual ensued. Adam, who had heretofore delighted in the conversation of God, now vainly attempts to hide himself from him, by running amongst the trees in the garden. Thus, that heavenly image, which God had formed, was defaced;

faced; his nature entirely changed; what he loved in his innocence, now became a terror to him. — In this wretched condition Adam begat a son in his own likeness. Dreadful indeed! Adam being created after the image of God. — Cain was born after the likeness of sinful Adam. — Woeful disparity. — Thus, from generation to generation the contagion has spread, and though God created man upright, “he has sought out to himself many inventions.”

BUT as God, who is rich in mercy, was pleased to provide a remedy to restore lost man to his favor, and that every mouth might be stopped,* and all flesh become guilty before him, the adorable Jehovah had provided the remedy long before man stood in actual need of it, “even before the foundation of the world.”† This remedy the blessed God held forth to Adam, the sinner, under the remarkable

* If we compare the 1st and 2d of Job with the 3d of Zachariah, it may not be improbable to conjecture, that satan made a kind of claim upon our first parents in consequence of their sin, and at first might attempt to charge God with injustice, because he had not immediately inflicted a temporal death upon them, nor yet appeared willing to give them up to satan, as an augmentation of his infernal kingdom; yet, when he found the arm which had lately drove him out of heaven, employed in the salvation of fallen man; how was he struck with horror and amazement; and more so, when that curse he had endeavoured to bring upon others, was doubly returned upon himself?

† 1 Pet. i. 20.

markable passage, where the Lord is pronouncing the curse upon the serpent, but a blessing upon the woman's seed.* This remedy is the subject of the following work; and as it is of the highest importance, it behoveth us, as rational creatures, strictly to consider the nature and reality of it. There is no way, which seems to offer us a probability of success, but that of tracing the subject as it is laid down in the word of God; from whence it appears, that the ever blessed Jehovah has from the time of his delivering the first promise to the close of the holy scriptures, continually vouchsafed to manifest himself as a reconciled God *only*, through the mediation of Jesus Christ. And though the whole plan of salvation was not altogether understood under the Jewish œconomy, in the latitude we hope it is now; (it being reserved to the Son of God and his apostles to publish it more clearly;) yet Jesus Christ has informed us that "Abraham saw his day and was glad." Hence it appears, that Old Testament saints had a certain knowledge of Jesus Christ as a mediator.† Though many of the passages frequently alluded to, seem dark and intricate to us, without the assistance we receive from the New Testament, (a blessing they did not enjoy;) yet "as their day was, so was their strength" (or faith.)

These

* Gen. iii. 14, 15.

† Compare John viii. 56, 57, with 1 Pet. i. 10, 11, 12.

These considerations allowed, it seems a necessary enquiry, to examine, how, or by what means this grand plan of salvation is revealed to us in our day, and how far the experience of *ancient* and *modern* saints agree, making proper allowances for times and circumstances. It has been already observed, that our first parents sinned against God, by which offence their natures were changed from holiness to sin: sin brought death and all its concomitant evils: the human (or carnal heart) was immediately at enmity against God: "The woman which thou gavest me," replies Adam (to God) "she gave me, and I did eat." Mark well, thou proud prevaricating Pharisee, where canst thou find the least signs of repentance in Adam, previous to the blessed God calling him to it? * For though the blessed God speaks to him in the mildest manner, yet Adam does not discover the least remorse for sin. He does not say to Eve before they began to make their Fig-leaf dress—We have sinned against God, let us return and ask forgiveness; if he had some ground

* I do not recollect that the scriptures any where positively assert that Adam truly repented, but the manner in which God appeared to him, together with the promise of the seed of the woman, seems to imply it: besides it appears that Adam's belief, was the real cause of giving his wife the name of Eve; denoting, that notwithstanding she had brought death upon them by sin, yet she was to be the mother of the living, *i. e.* that the Saviour was to be born of a woman, by whose means life and immortality should be restored to man.

ground of argument might arise for natural ability.

HENCE it appears, that sin is opposite to holiness, that sinners in themselves, without a Mediator, are subject to God's wrath and displeasure; and as sin tends to drive the soul from God, consequently nothing but grace can point out to man the way of salvation. Nor is the case of Adam's singular; for when man began to multiply upon the face of the earth, their evil imaginations multiplied likewise: so that God (speaking after the manner of men) was grieved to the heart, and it repented him that he had made man upon the earth.*

FURTHER remarks on this head would be altogether needless; suffice it to say, that sin so far abounded, that God was pleased to punish the old world with a flood, by which all mankind were destroyed, save Noah and his family. Here we see, that notwithstanding the tender mercies of God are such, that it grieved him to the heart; yet his justice is such, notwithstanding his mercy is so great, that sinners must be punished if they reject his offered grace.

NOAH and his family are preserved; the earth is replenished;

* Gen. vi.

replenished; men multiply abundantly upon the face of it; and sin, the inseparable companion of fallen man, increased likewise. Nimrod, the leader of the apostate race, defies the power of the most high God, and begins to build the tower of Babel to secure himself and followers from a second flood. — Being restrained by the Lord from this work, and their language turned into confusion, they wandered up and down, following their own inventions. But as servile fear is one time or other attendant upon vice and immorality, those poor unhappy souls, who are thus grasping after fancied power, generally become the most abject slaves to this fear, and frequently manifest it in the most ridiculous manner; and notwithstanding they seem to deny the very being of a God, by their wicked works, yet the thoughts of him are never entirely erased out of their minds: yet as they wilfully rejected him, he likewise gave them up to their own lusts; which, working in them, led them to commit all manner of uncleanness and Idolatry.* Hence, the most superstitious idolatry and ignorance prevailed, with all the detestable views which arise from them. — But God, who never leaves himself without a witness, called Abraham out of the land of Chaldea to bear testimony to his name. Abraham was commanded to walk through the length and breadth of

* Rom. i. 24, 25.

of the land of Canaan. † The Lord appeared unto him, and informed him that his seed should be a stranger in a land that was not their's; and should serve them, and they should afflict them four hundred years: after which, the Lord would judge their enemies, and bring the seed of Abraham out to possess the promised inheritance. †

Now let it be observed, that while Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were wandering up and down through the land of Canaan, they formed a kind of independent government, agreeable to the patriarchal institution; and, when they came to the borders of the city of idolators, God said, "I will reprove kings for your sakes." And this we find eminently fulfilled in the instances of Abimelech, Pharaoh, and others. But when they began to multiply abundantly, they threw off their dependence upon God, slighted the instructions given them by the pious fathers, and willingly mingled themselves with idolators. Hence we see, that God for wise purposes* left them in a great measure to follow

‡ Abraham sojourning in the land of Canaan, and building altars to the God of Heaven, was undoubtedly a notable testimony to the *truth*; and it appears that he made some converts, for it seems that Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, hazarded their lives to serve Abraham on Lot's account. Gen. xiv.

† See the promise at large. Gen. xv.

* We find no particular characters mentioned amongst the Israelites, from Joseph to Moses. — It is a melancholly proof that God had withdrawn himself from them.

follow their own inventions: and as they had given so many signs of their desires to reign one over another, contrary to the patriarchal institution, God was pleased to withdraw himself, in some measure, from them; and to leave them for a while without those visible tokens of kingly authority and care, which he, in former instances, had so peculiarly manifested over them. And as their desire had been to rule over one another without law, the Lord wisely left them, for a time, in the hands of an absolute monarch, whose will was his law. For, no sooner were the peculiar services of Joseph forgot, but Israel felt the effects of their folly. — They had given up, in a great measure, their patriarchal form of government; and, perhaps the simple form in which they worshipped God. There is no doubt, but that they did continue to worship God; perhaps in that faint and cold way which gave offence to the idolators of Egypt, rather than procure their esteem. † They kept up the worship of
the

† This perhaps, to some may appear strange, that the coolness of the worshippers should give offence to idolators, who would be better pleased, if men was not to worship God at all. — But I think there are two reasons which may be given in support of our hypothesis. First, that idolators are for the most part very zealous in their worship. 1 Kings, xviii. 28, 29. and therefore condemn others for hypocrites, who appear so cool and careless in their devotions; Secondly, where people make an honourable profession of God, he generally

the true God just enough to procure themselves the malice and ill-will of their enemies ; which daily increasing, brought upon them all the evils they afterwards felt. Heavy taxes were imposed upon them ; and the false notions of grandeur that the tyrant Pharaoh had imbibed, must be supported by the labours of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians now considered as their slaves or bondmen.

THIS bondage is by us considered as a type of natural state or original sin, and the deliverance from it in the following work is considered as an emblem of regenerating grace. And as the preaching of the gospel is the mean whereby the Lord brings his people to a knowledge of himself, so were these Israelites brought to believe in the Lord as their deliverer, from this intolerable yoke of bondage, by the preaching of Moses and Aaron. — The very extraordinary manner which God preserved Moses, and qualified him for this work, deserves our serious attention. For notwithstanding the cruel edict published by Pharaoh to drown all the Israelitish male-children, yet Moses was preserved ; and Pharaoh's daughter who found him in the

generally constrains their enemies in such a manner, that though they do not love, neither them nor their religion, yet they allow there is something in it worthy of imitation. Gen. xxiii. 5, 6, Num. xxiii. 18 to 24.

the water, so far from destroying him (according to the king's decree) put him out to nurse, and adopted him for her own son. Thus Moses became acquainted with all the learning of Egypt, and was literally accomplished for all the great and important services which God afterwards called him to. — After the faith of Moses was sufficiently established, (during the forty years he was in the land of Midian) the Lord appeared to him while he was feeding the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, in the wilderness, and gave him his mission; and sent him forth to be the temporal deliverer of his people, in conjunction with Aaron his brother; who, though his elder brother, was yet to be his servant. — Moses appeared very unwilling to go, but after God had strengthened his faith and assured him of his protection, he goes, and finds the Israelites in a most deplorable condition, grievously afflicted by Pharaoh and his task-masters; whom God, for wise purposes, had permitted to oppress his people, in order that they might know how to prize their deliverance the more; and receive with thankfulness, the instructions that should be given by Moses.

THUS, having considered the nature of the fall, and proved that all men are born in a state of sin, and that none can come to God in any other way but
by

by and through a Mediator, and that this Mediator must be manifested to them by instruments raised up by God, and testified by his Holy Spirit : We now come to the Journeyings of the Israelites out of Egypt, and through the wilderness to the promised land; and to shew the correspondency there is between the experience of a true believer in Christ, and the travels of that favoured people.



THE
JOURNAL
OF
THE
AMERICAN
MUSEUM
OF
NATURAL
HISTORY
NEW YORK
1881

THE



THE
JOURNEYINGS OF THE ISRAELITES
IMPROVED.

EXODUS, iv. 29, 30, 31.

And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel: And Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed down their heads and worshipped.

HAVING observed in the Introduction, that men are all born in a state of sin, and that they cannot come to God in any other way than by a Mediator, and that this Mediator must be exhibited to man by a revelation of the mind and will of God to man; we now come to consider
C the

the subject before us; namely, The deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt; shewing the similarity there is between this deliverance, and the experience of a true believer in Christ.

WE have already observed, that it is our intention to consider the Egyptian bondage as an emblem of original sin, or rather as a type of a soul, both in original and actual sin. — Here we observe, that Moses and Aaron went, according to the express command of God, to publish deliverance to a people oppressed in a most extraordinary manner, by a proud and cruel tyrant. God had promised their fathers that he would deliver them, and give them the land of Canaan for a possession. But while they lived at ease in Egypt, it does not appear that they much wanted to change their situation, which was in the fat of the land, for a country they knew nothing of, but by report. But when the Lord was pleased to suffer Pharaoh to afflict them, and to lay heavy burdens upon them, they cried; and God heard their groaning, and remembered his covenant with their fathers, and sent Moses and Aaron to preach deliverance to them. Now, when the Lord sends his ministers to preach the glad tidings of salvation by Christ, who is it that believes and worships? I believe I may say, none, but

but such as are made to see their wretched and undone state, both by nature and practice, such (through grace) are made to see how satan has for a long time tyrannized over them, and led them as captives at his own will. These, I say, through grace believe and worship: they look back with astonishment upon their past conduct, they adore the goodness of God, in that he hath spared them as monuments of mercy, and willingly believe the promise that God has made in his word. They are desirous to follow him in his appointed ways, and are waiting upon him in the means which he hath laid down in his word, in order to learn more of his mind and will. But satan, like Pharaoh, is determined to oppose their passage, and raises up his legions, who in various ways assault the young converts; and for a time woefully oppresses, and keeps them back in their intended journey. The world, tribulation, false brethren, and an unsanctified heart, keep the christian for a while in suspense; while unbelief descrys the difficulties that lie in the way. But O! adored be the name of our Jehovah, who, when he begins the work, never leaves it unfinished,—Pharaoh and satan may for a while seem to thwart his appointments; but they shall soon find their power circumscribed. — Chap. v. vi. vii. viii. ix. x. and xi. gives us an account of the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, and the dreadful plagues which God inflicted upon the

c 2

Egyptians,

Egyptians, both to convince those idolators that the Lord was God, and none other; and likewise to confirm his servant's faith, to shew those who were weak and doubting, that he was able, by his own power, to deliver them, though all the world should oppose. — Chap. xii. shews their deliverance: the passover is instituted, being a beautiful emblem of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which must by faith be sprinkled upon the door of our hearts, or we must fall by the destroying angel at the last day. This passover which was commanded annually to be repeated, likewise pointed out to the Israelites, that in the fulness of time Jesus Christ should come in the flesh, and perfectly fulfil that law which they imperfectly taught, and was continually breaking; that he should afterwards be offered up as a sacrifice for sin (like unto a lamb without blemish,) that his righteousness might be imputed to all that believe, and that through his death, divine justice might be satisfied: so that "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Psal. lxxxv. 10.

WE now find Israel delivered from Pharaoh, marching out of the land in triumph, the first-born of their enemies slain, nothing hindering; but they seem to be in full pursuit, and nearly within possession of the promised land. — They march with haste
through

through the borders of Egypt, and turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, without ever expecting any more trouble from Pharoah. So it is with the new convert. — He feels various and many struggles at first hearing the word; the pangs of the new birth work severely upon him; his conscience, like Pharaoh's task-masters, put him upon double duty; he finds himself unable to fulfil the arduous task; he calls to the Lord, who is pleased, in some measure, to inform him that the work is his own; that he must patiently wait his time, and then expect deliverance; and that this is through the merits of Christ, and not through any thing of the creature. Now it is, he begins to understand something of the way of salvation, and runs with alacrity in the paths of truth. But, alas! satan, though at first silenced by the powerful preaching of the word, is meditating a furious attack on the soul: he raises all his legions for the purpose, and follows with a mighty army; he points in dreadful colours the numerous sins the poor convert has been guilty of, calling them all to view from his very infancy; while the Lord for a while withdraws his presence, and leaves the soul to the buffetings of satan. The flesh murmurs against the spirit, and the soul all-perplexed looks forward and sees the red sea of God's wrath before him; the enemy pressing hard behind him; while unbelief and self-

will

will form two inaccessible mountains on either side. In this situation he begins to cry mightily to God for help, who by the spirit leads him to some comfortable portion of his word, and enables him to believe; to stand still and see the salvation of God. * Now the poor trembling sinner begins to take a little comfort; he endeavours to believe; he prays that God would remove his unbelief. The red sea, which before prefigured the wrath of God, now begins to open a passage for him: through faith he ventures in, and finds it the sweet emblem of the blood of Jesus Christ, the immaculate Lamb, the only passage to the heavenly Canaan; where all his sins are washed away; or in other words, where all his enemies are drowned. Then the soul in extacies of joy, praises and magnifies the Lord. Chap. xv.

LET us now return to the Israelites whom we left encamped at Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. — Moses having returned at the express command of God, and led the people out of the direct road to Canaan, it was told Pharaoh that the people fled, see chap. xiv. 2. and the heart of Pharaoh was still hardened, saying, Why have we
let

* Acts xvi. and xxxi. Rev. iii. 11. Stand still, &c. is a passage the Antinomians make use of to a very bad purpose. — To stand still in difficulties, while God opens a way for escape, is very different from standing still in Egypt.

let the people go from serving us? And he made ready his chariots, and took his people with him, even a very great army, with a fixed resolution, either to bring them back or destroy them; but the Lord, who was rich in mercy towards them, removed the cloudy pillar which went before to go behind them; which still continued to be a light to the Israelites, but a cloud and darkness to the Egyptians. So is the word of God to his people; it giveth light and understanding to them, but is full of darkness to their enemies.—This great miracle prevented the two armies from coming near each other all the night; and Moses, by the command of God, having smote the waters with his rod, the sea divided, (being agitated by a mighty shock of the earth, which was accompanied with most awful thunderings and lightnings :) † and the Israelites, at the command of God, marched through, but the Egyptians (like the infidels of our day) attributing this wonderful miracle to chance, or common providence, followed after, and were all drowned in the sea; a punishment which the Lord, in justice, brought upon them for their unnatural edict, in drowning the Hebrew children, and for
all

† The sacred writer, perhaps, may not have mentioned the account of this tempest here, nor the manner in which God was pleased to divide the waters; but if we compare Psal. xviii, from ver. 6. to 21, and Psal. lxxvii. 16 to the end, with cxiv. no doubt can arise, but this was the case.

all their other cruelties exercised over those people; see Psal. vii. 15, 16. lvii. 6. xciv. 23. Let this be a caution to all those who oppose the worship of God, lest they share a similar punishment.

HAVING beheld the wonderful works of God in serving them, they rejoiced, and gave God the glory, as you may find at large in Chap. xv. Then Moses brought Israel from the red sea into the wilderness, ver. 22. where they travelled three days and found no water to drink: and when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters, because they were bitter. So it frequently happens to the soul: for though the Lord, by his spirit, has led the christian out of his spiritual bondage, and fully convinced him that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin; and though, by faith, he has been led through the red sea of Christ's blood, yet a three days' journey into the wilderness of this world leads him to drink of the waters of Marah. Something of the old nature still remains; and the soul finds the duties of religion exceedingly bitter at such a time. — Perhaps the christian, after seeing his enemies drowned, may think it an easy task to walk through the wilderness in his own strength; or he may be drawn aside to hear preachers that set up good works in opposition to Christ; and this, to the true believer, will be exceedingly bitter. Many other instances

instances the believer meets with that are bitter indeed; and unbelief begins to murmur: yet when faith prevails, the believer has fresh views of Jesus as a crucified Redeemer, as ver. 25, every trouble brings with it deliverance, and all from the same indulgent hand.

"Behold the living fountain flows

"In streams as various as your woes." WATTS.

THE fountains and palm trees at Elam, may perhaps represent the peaceable situation of the mind, when under the word preached in its purity. — Yet after such extraordinary discoveries of his love, the soul is too often elevated, and spiritual pride creeps in. Then it is necessary for us to be led forth from such delightful situations, in order to humble us; and we are led into a barren land, where there is a scarcity of gospel ordinances, to let us feel the want of heavenly bread, that we may learn to prize those comforts the Lord bestows upon us; and at the same time, to place our whole dependence upon him: and sometimes this happens in a literal sense, for believers are often brought into great straits and difficulties in worldly affairs, to humble them, and to make them leave caring for the world, that they may in time say with Paul, "I count all things but dross and dung, in comparison of Christ." —

D

Having

Having sensibly felt their hunger, the Lord quickly sends relief, and rains down the manna of his love; and the soul, all humble and adoring, gathers it with the hand of faith: yet none gathers a sufficiency for the morrow. The strong in faith gather but their homer full; nor is the weak in want; each gets a sufficiency, agreeable to God's word. "As thy day is, so is thy strength." But those who lay up for the morrow meet with a sad disappointment: it breeds worms, and stinks. So it is with professors, who through idleness and luke-warmness, content themselves, wholly, with living on former experiences and frames of mind; such, I say, will certainly be fatally disappointed; that which before was their comfort, will now turn a worm to their conscience, and eat up their hopes of eternal salvation, and their former hypocritical profession will stink in the nostrils of an Holy God. — Beware, O man! whoever thou art, and be seeking, by every mean, fresh manifestations of his love; so shall your soul be fed with the heavenly food, till you come to the borders of the heavenly Canaan. — Chap. xvii. shews us how dangerous it is to depart from the ordinances of God into the world. Yet it must be so: we are not yet through this howling wilderness; it is our duty to march forward; our families must be provided for, and every honest

honest mean ought to be used for their support and comfort. Yet, if we pursue those means with too much ardour, our thoughts are often drawn from God, and we soon feel the bad effects of our back-sliding. The Lord withdraws his presence, and the soul is soon famished with thirst. — Now he looks to the minister or perhaps to some friend, rather than to Jesus Christ: he complains of the hardness of his case, rather than the hardness of his heart; he murmurs and repines: yet the Lord, who is rich in mercy, provides a relief. — The waters flow from the rock in great abundance. Ver. 6. Such repeated ingratitude requires chastisement, and the Lord is pleased to suffer Amalek (*i. e.*) the men of the world, to fight against him. Ver. 8.

THE christian's conduct, imperfect as it is, always gives offence to the world, and generally meets with opposition from worldly men. In this case it is the christian's duty to fight,* though utterly unable

* Perhaps, no part of the christian's conduct in worldly matters requires more serious attention than this. A contentious wrangling professor is a scandal to religion, and ought to be discountenanced by all who make a profession: for Christ hath said, "If a man smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other; and if a man sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." Yet I humbly conceive, that a christian ought to act in a public capacity with

able in himself; yet when he fights and prays, he is sure to prevail.

BEFORE

with a strict eye to justice. If he is a magistrate, he ought to deliver them that are oppressed, without paying any regard to party disputes, or favor to the oppressor, however great he may be in the esteem of worldly men. If he be called upon a jury, to give his verdict upon any particular cause, he ought strictly to enquire into the merits of it; and after well weighing the matter, and comparing it with the law of God, and his country, he ought to give in his verdict accordingly, without reserve, though he may be brow-beaten by the judge who sits on the bench. — I rejoice to think that we still have a few in this corrupt and venal age, who have acted in this upright manner. May they still be enabled to persevere, and disdain the very thoughts of accepting a bribe. — On the other hand, my very soul recoils at the thoughts of the baseness and meanness of others, who for the sake of places of profit, or through fear of offending, have been active instruments in oppressing and persecuting the true believers in Christ: not to mention the fury of a Jefferies, nor the luke-warmness of an Hale. Where will those time-serving creatures appear, who so actively executed the warrants of distress on our venerable forefathers? And what must be the feelings of some, who act under the character of constable in our day, (if they would allow themselves time for a little reflection,) who swallow down oaths at every petty sessions, as they do their liquor after dinner? It is pity that oaths should be required upon every small affair. And I am sorry that our magistrates do not caution ignorant people, more than they do, about the nature of an oath. It is not my business to direct in national affairs, but I cannot help thinking but that a small penalty would operate more forcibly upon the minds of such men, as are now under consideration, than the present mode of oaths. — I have noticed this last clause here, as I know several serious men, who have been obliged to serve this disagreeable office; and on account of others complying, have done it themselves; whereby their consciences are burdened, and their peace much disturbed. — Let me tell such, that they ought to pay a strict attention to the word of God, and not trifle with oaths. Let them remember that our venerable forefathers purchased our freedom at a dear rate, and that if we comply in every punctilio with the custom

BEFORE I quit this head, I shall endeavour to shew something of the cause of this war, between the men of the world, and the christian. When distinguishing grace has reached the heart, and led the believer from one degree of grace to another; he begins to feel for others, and is sorely grieved to hear the word of God evil spoken of, and his holy name blasphemed. Hence, he reproves the swearer, the liar, and sabbath-breaker: and if he is a man of property, he rescues the poor from the oppressor; in a word, he disdains to walk after the custom of this world, but makes the word of God the rule of his conduct. This being so opposite to worldly men, they are often complaining against him; and in a variety of ways, they are attacking the christian: Sometimes, in his character, by magnifying some of the good man's imperfections, or, by raising false and scandalous reports, with a design to injure him; at other times they endeavour to bring him into difficulties, by setting others against

custom of the times, we bid fair to lose those privileges such venerable men thought dearer than life.—I cannot help thinking, that if men would act more firmly and uprightly in our courts of judicature, we should soon have those shackles taken off, which have so unjustly fettered the Dissenters, and marked them as unworthy of trust in national affairs. — I have no wish to see Dissenters craving after things of this kind; but surely, it is no credit to this kingdom, that the greater half of the inhabitants, should be forbid, by law, to serve their sovereign; when it evidently appears, that their principles are the only ones which favor and support his government.

against him that are his friends, and with whom he may have such dealings, that the very support of his family may seem to hang upon their conduct towards him: but if the christian does but pray as well as fight, he will surely prevail. He may, indeed, lose his farm, or his shop, or his particular customers, but “none shall forsake house, or lands, for my name’s sake,” saith Jesus, “but shall receive an hundredfold more in this world, and in the end everlasting life.”

CHAP. xviii. informs us of Jethro’s coming to Moses, &c. Now while the Lord is thus exercising his followers, the neighbourhood is often much alarmed with the report of fanaticks, puritanism, separatists, non-conformists, and methodists, (for each have had their term) and the followers of the humble Jesus, have been reviled in this manner, more or less, in all ages: and after the soul has been much exercised, the report reaches distant professors, who, in imitation of Jethro, pay them a visit, and give them wholesome instructions. They bless God for their deliverance, and attribute the glory to him alone: and though, perhaps, they may not agree exactly in the ceremonial part of the worship of God, yet they worship together, and eat together too: a sufficient reason, to me, for the practice of mixed communion, providing the
the

the communicants do but agree in the fundamental articles of the christian faith. And, if we observe the conversation that follows in this Chap. as ver. 17, and so on, it seems to me, that the most orthodox minister need not be above receiving instruction; though it may seem that others, in some cases, may not be altogether so consistent as themselves. — No doubt but Jethro fell short of Moses in wisdom, both as a minister and a legislator; yet Moses receives Jethro's advice in the appointment of the Jewish sanhedrim: and God, upon the enquiry of Moses, was pleased to countenance the plan. — The advantage of christian conversation, is a great mean to heighten our zeal, and to enlighten devotion; and here we see the effects of it, to the end of this Chap. But let it be here observed, that though I said this might be considered as a reason for free communion, yet, I think that the communicants ought to know something of each other's leading principles; as there is no doubt but Moses well knew those of Jethro's. I mention this, because some, of late, have carried their notions so far respecting free communion, that they deny the authority of the church, in requiring such information: but, I think it is one thing to be forced into a communion, and, another to have a desire to be admitted. But this is not the place for handling such disputes. — We now come to Chap. xix. where

where Moses is commanded to prepare the people for the hearing and receiving the law; which was delivered to them by fearful signs, as ver. 18. to the end; shewing to them, that the Lord who commanded them to obey his law, was able to punish their disobedience. And here I would observe, that though the Lord was pleased to speak to Moses, in plain language, as a man speaketh to his friend, yet, there was no similitude or likeness seen; so that it must be the grossest sin to pretend to worship under any form. And, in this respect, it seems evident, that the roman catholicks have no foundation in the word of God, for the practice of setting up images, and bowing down to them; see the first and second commandments, Chap. xx. 4, 5, 6. which expressly contradict that diabolical practice; and may the Lord, of his infinite goodness and mercy, grant, that all who profess the religion of Jesus, may be kept from such wicked and pernicious practices.

LET us now take a view of the law, as it stands recorded in Chap. xx. "The law," saith St. Paul, "is our school-master to bring us unto Christ." Gal. iii. 24. First, the law teacheth perfect obedience, saying, "Do this and live;" and "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law." Gal. iii. 10. Look then, O man!

man, whoever thou art, and see if thou canst fulfil this law. Take a view of its contents. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and thy neighbour as thyself." — He that thinks that he has done this, knows but little of his own heart; as you may observe by the conduct of one of this stamp in Mark's gospel, Chap. x. 22. — Again, didst thou never take the name of God in vain? reflect but for a moment upon your past conversation. How often has his holy name fallen from your polluted lips, in a careless indifferent manner? have you never called upon God to bear witness to a lye? have you never mentioned his name, to give colour to some base design, or added it to some dreadful oath or imprecation? — If thou hast; and I am sure thy conscience will tell thee that thou hast; how canst thou expect salvation by the law? for James tells us in his Epistle, that "he that offendeth but in one point, is guilty of all." Chap. ii. 10. — And if you have broken the law, you have offended against an infinite God, and you, as a finite creature, cannot make satisfaction to infinite Justice for such a breach; consequently you must lie under the penalties of the law, which is death. — "The wages of sin" (saith Paul) "is death." Rom. vi. 23. — By the like rule, you may compare your past and present conduct with all the other commandments, and see if you have

not broke all of them, either in thought, word, or deed. I shall pass over all the rest, and leave them to your most retired moments, and only take some notice of the 10th. — “Thou shalt not covet,” &c. &c. Where is the man, that can say before God, the searcher of hearts, that he never coveted any thing of his neighbour’s? Did you never covet his farm, his wife, his servants? &c. &c. Did you never say in your heart, was that adjoining field laid to mine, how advantageous would it be to me: was I situated in that shop, or possessed of such or such a warehouse, that commands such and such a place, I should then be happy? One moment’s cool reflection would tell you, that you are guilty of many of those things: — consequently a breaker of the law. — You will then say perhaps with the apostles “Who then shall be saved?” I answer, all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. You say, how? Answer, it has already been observed in the remarks on the 12th. Chap. But as man is so desirous of becoming his own saviour, I shall in this place take notice of this important subject. — When the Lord was pleased to create man, he created him in his own image; but as God is the fountain of wisdom, knowing all things, he knew that man would fall from that holy state in which he was created, and therefore the blessed trinity, God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, consulting on this matter (if I
may

may be allowed the expression ||) God the Son covenanted with the Father, and the blessed spirit, to come into the world to take man's nature upon him, to fulfil the law ‡ which should be delivered to man, both in thought, word, and deed; afterwards to give himself up to the death of the cross, as a sacrifice for sin. — Now Jesus Christ, being † God as well as man, was able to do this great work: accordingly, in the fulness of time, Christ came, and fulfilled all righteousness, and gave himself willingly to the stroke of divine justice; and so offered up his own life for the sins of his people, as a § satisfaction to God the Father, for the dishonour men had done to his law. Now this satisfaction being made by Jesus Christ, who being both God and man, (as has been observed already) it was an infinite satisfaction, and consequently acceptable in the sight of an infinite God.* It was the fulfilment of that covenant engagement made between God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, before the foundation of the world. || Hence arises the christian's consolation; finding himself utterly unable to fulfil the law himself, his faith directs him to the Lord

|| This expression I know does not suit many at this time of day, but I think the method of creation where God works progressively, sufficiently justifies the idea. See also Watt's Lyric Poems. Page 63.

‡ Mat. v. 17. † John i. 1. Heb. i. 8. & John. xiii. 13.
§ Rom. iv. 25. Heb. ix. 12 to 14. 26 and 28. * Mat.
xvii. 5. Heb. vi. 26. || 1 Pet. i. 29.

Lord Jesus Christ, where he finds an all-sufficient Saviour, who is able to save to the uttermost. He finds that righteousness which the Lord Jesus Christ wrought out by his obedience ‡ imputed to him; whilst that precious blood which was shed on the cross, is by faith sprinkled upon the conscience, cleansing the soul from dead works to serve the living God; not like the holy water which the Roman priests sprinkle upon the bodies of their hearers outwardly, but inwardly applied by the Holy Ghost, agreeable to the words of Jesus Christ. John xv. 26. and xvi. 13.

Thus, having taken a short view of the holiness and extent of the law of man's insufficiency to fulfil the same, in point of his own justification; and having likewise endeavoured to lead the soul to Jesus Christ, where alone he must receive salvation, or perish everlastingly; I shall now return to Chaps. xix. and xx. of Exodus. Here we find that the Israelites had already travelled three months since their departure from Egypt: they had in a variety of instances, experienced the goodness of God towards them; yet it seems necessary that they should have some further knowledge of the holiness of God, and of the extent of his law. — Hence, the Lord not only delivers the law to them, but he ap-
pears

‡ James ii. 23.

pears to them in all the majesty and grandeur that mortals, in this frail state are capable of beholding. — View the account, ye earthly monarchs, and learn to think soberly of yourselves! See in what solemn pomp the great Jehovah appears. His chariot, a pitchy cloud — His advanced guards, the forked lightnings — While the loud thunders awfully proclaim his dreadful approach, even the stupendous mountain totters to its very foundation, and seems to wait his awful word, to sink it into its ancient nothingness: while Moses, that highly favoured servant, exceedingly fears and * quakes. Now we find the Israelites lose all their former courage; they no sooner see this wonderful sight, but paleness sits upon every cheek; they disown all fancied merit and self-sufficiency: they had promised to fulfil his † commands, but now they saw their mistake; they crave a ‡ Mediator, lest they should be consumed with the burning mountain. — Tremble, O my soul, at the thoughts of offending such a God as this! If his appearance is thus awful, when revealing his mind and will, what will it be when he comes to take vengeance on those who have disobeyed his most holy commands, and delighted in breaking his laws. || — Let this be a caution to ministers

* Heb. xii. 21. † Exod. xix. 8. ‡ Exod. xx. 19.
 || Psal. ii. 5, 6, 7. See also that admirable Poem of Dr. Watts's. Lyric Poems, P. 33.

nisters of the gospel, lest they forget to point out the terrors of the law. — Many of their hearers may appear to have high notions of the doctrines of the gospel; yet, to their shame be it spoken, their life and conversation belies their profession, and plainly informs us, that there is no religion in them, but what there is in their heads. — Let us remember that christianity teaches us to deny ourselves; likewise that God, out of Christ, is a consuming fire*.

AFTER the delivery of the moral law, the ceremonial law was delivered to instruct them in their worship; to teach them sound policy, both in church and state, and to point out to them the true Messiah; the antitype of which, their ceremonies and sacrifices all alluded to; and this may inform us, that professors ought to have their societies under proper regulations; but beware, lest in this, you take more delight in the ordinances of men, than in the commandments of God. — Of these ceremonies and institutions, see Chap. xxxi to xxxii. But observe, that though I say societies ought to be under proper regulations, I do not mean that they ought to observe these very ceremonies, for they were all abolished in † Christ. — Yet I believe that christians ought to ‡ assemble themselves, and to form societies or churches; which societies or churches ought to be governed

* Heb. xii. 9. † Dan. ix. 27. Jo. xix. 30. Acts xv. The whole Epistle to the Hebrews, Timothy and Titus.

‡ Heb. x. 25.

verned by the rule of God's word; which appears exceeding plain in all those passages before alluded to.

Exod. Chap. xxxii. Here we see how soon they fell from the worship of the true God in the absence of Moses, and made themselves an image after the manner of Egypt, even to worship it, &c. And likewise how the Lord refused to go with them on account of their committing this heinous offence. Let this be a caution to ministers, who through fear of offending their hearers, neglect to reprove sin, lest, like Aaron, they are excluded the benefit of entering into the promised land. Beware, O hearers! lest such dreadful sins should require the acquiescence of your nearest friends in your damnation. Ver. 26 to 30.

CHAP. xxxiii. amongst other things, informs us of the desire Moses had to see the Lord. But, alas! sin has so far defiled the best of men, that they cannot, while in the flesh, behold the Lord in full majesty, and live. But here we see the Lord, in some measure, answering the desires of his servant, as ver. 19 to 21. — "I will put thee in a clift of the rock". — A beautiful emblem of the Lord Jesus Christ. For how shall man, vile man, approach an holy God, unless he is put "in the clift of the rock," Christ Jesus;
that

that clift which was made by the Roman fpear; which spilled the precious blood of Jefus Chrift.

HAVING already fpoken fomewhat of the law, it may be unnecessary to fay any thing further from the book of Exodus, as the remaining part does not appear to answer the design we have in view; which is to compare the Journeyings of the Ifraelites to the experience of a believer in Chrift, except it be Chap. xxxv. 21. "And every one whose heart was opened," &c. &c. — Now I believe it is the duty of every chriftian, according to his ability, to adminifter to the building of, or repairing religious houfes, and what may be thought neceffary towards the fupport of the gofpel. — But though we pafs it over for the before-mentioned reafons, yet we would advife our readers to keep a ftrict eye upon it, and likewise upon the whole of Leviticus, to remind them of God's hatred to fin, and of the need we all ftand in, of the blood of Chrift, to cleanse us from our daily defilements.

WE now come to fome particular cafes, which we confider under the character of church and national troubles. The firft of which we intend to notice, is that awful account we have in the 10th. Chapter of Leviticus, of the death of Nadab and Abihu, two of Aaron's fons, who, notwithstanding their clear

clear call to the priesthood; yet in attempting to make innovations in the worship of God, were devoured by fire from the Lord. — Let this be a caution, both to ministers and people, to keep close to the written word of God, and never defile their conscience by wordly traditions, however plausible they may appear to some. Take heed, ye young ministers, how ye handle the word of God, when you deliver your confessions of faith, and give place to the word of God, rather than to party names. Be not hasty in falling in with one scheme, and rejecting another: it is not Calvin, or Luther, that will be your Saviour, or Judge! but God, who watches over you with a jealous eye. If you assume his prerogative, although you may escape the like punishment in this world, remember the day cometh which shall burn as an oven; when all the proud, and all that do wickedly, shall be burnt up, &c. Mal. iv. also 1 Cor. iii. 13.

LEVIT. Chap. xiv. 10 to 17, gives us an account of the unhappy consequences of professing people inter-marrying with * unbelievers. — An Israelitish

* This, like many others in the christian life, is a matter of serious concern, and nearly amounts to a paradox: few, very few of our youth, have much religion before the time they entertain thoughts of matrimony; yet out of these few,
F little

Israelitish woman having married an Egyptian, it seems they had a son, "and the son of the Israelitish woman strove with a man of Israel in the camp; and the son of the Israelitish woman blasphemed the name of the Lord, and cursed." Here observe that the Holy Ghost, to convince us of the error of such mixed marriages, gives us the name of the woman, who thus married contrary to the advice of their pious ancestors (which was afterward confirmed by the Mosaic institution) fixing, as it were, an everlasting shame upon her; and note, she was of the tribe of Dan, who was one of Jacob's sons, by his concubine Bilhah.—"Now the man was put inward, that the mind of the Lord might be shewed them." This seems to point out to us the propriety of church discipline; and I cannot help thinking, but that the elders of every church ought carefully to inspect in-

to

little regard is paid to the education or profession of the intended partner.—A Dissenter can marry a rich young woman, though she be brought up at the church and dancing school: and so can a Church-man marry a Dissenter's daughter if there is but plenty of money, though perhaps he has been taught all his life time to sneer at the old man's singularity in religion.—I confess that no general rule can be laid down in this respect, for there are many formal professors of all persuasions; and it is not enough to seek for a partner who has had a similar education in religious matters with yourself, but to seek whether she is earnest in that profession: if such cannot be found, a sober person of another persuasion, by education, who is liberal in sentiment, may become in time the most religious. See Ruth and many others.

to matters of this kind, and to speak frequently to the youth upon such subjects, as well as to the parents, who, at least, ought to give their children proper instructions on this head. "Be ye not unequally yoked together," says St. Paul; and if any should remain obstinate, the church ought to pass a censure upon them; at the same time to let them know, that it is the mind of the Lord; by reading over suitable portions of scripture, not only for their instruction, but that others may also hear and fear: but if there are signs of repentance, restore such again. See 2 Cor. ii. But at the same time see that (in the judgement of charity) their repentance is sincere, for formality is the very bane of religion.

MUCH might be said of the numbering and marshalling the Israelites, as described in Num. i. ii. but as it may seem to some to be more of a national concern, little will be said here upon that; yet let us observe, that it is our duty to "submit to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake," providing it be not contrary to the revealed will of God. And it would be well if those to whom the management of national affairs is committed, if they would but make the word of God their study; as they might undoubtedly find sufficient instruction to qualify them for those great and important services, far beyond what they receive

ceive from the most accomplished politicians of the age, who neglect the word of God for Aristotle, Voltaire, or Chesterfield. This I think is sufficiently illustrated by the story of Dathan and Abiram. Chap. xvi. 5. Here you find the holy man of God meeting a factious band, in all the meekness and gentleness of his character making his grand appeal to heaven, and adds, "to-morrow the Lord will shew who are his." Would the politicians of this age follow his example, the spirit of party, which has so long disgraced the British senate, would soon begin to hide it's head. — "I have not taken one ass from them," as a bribe, "neither have I hurt one of them by unjust judgement," is the declaration of the holy man.

* BEWARE then, O reader, how you engage in party matters; nay, rather separate yourselves from

* Although I say beware how you engage in party disputes, yet I do not say (nor advise others to say) that passive obedience and non-resistance, are doctrines founded on truth. Witness the case of David, also Jehoiada's conduct, 2 Chron. xxiii. No doubt in the least arises in my mind, but that according to the constitutional laws of this kingdom, that the king is bound to abide by the laws, and never to infringe upon the liberties of the subject, no more than the subject can invade the prerogative of the crown. A strict eye upon these will direct the good man how to act. Let it be the laws of his country, which are founded upon equity and truth, that he venerates in all matters of dispute, and not a party of designing men, whose only aim is to make their fortunes, or aggrandize their families.

from amongst them, lest ye be consumed in their iniquity. Read the whole story. It seems that Korah invaded the priests' office, while Dathan and Abiram fought for the government, as being descended from Reuben, Jacob's eldest son. And it is a well known fact, that the clergy in this kingdom have often been found too forward in matters of this kind. St. Peter's chair, a Cardinal's cap, or a Bishop's see, are objects so desirable to a carnal and ambitious mind, that the contending candidates have often raised such a storm, which has swallowed up many a city in this and the neighbouring kingdoms. But, alas! like them on the morrow, we rebel. — Earthquakes, fires, storms, &c. &c. are all considered as common accidents of time and chance by the world at large, rather than the just judgements of an angry God upon a guilty world. O! the depravity of the heart, what a mercy it is to have affliction sanctified; if not, one trouble only makes way for another. — O! England! England! let past experience teach thee wisdom, lest thou shouldest experience once more † such dreadful visitations

† These observations were made by the author some little time after the late riot in London. The past visitations which most occurred to his mind, were the plague in 1665; and the great fire in 1666; both which, undoubtedly, were tokens of God's displeasure against this kingdom, for the blood which was shed in the civil wars, and the persecutions which

tions as in time past, when God, in great anger, made inquisition for blood.

BUT I must leave state matters to those more immediately concerned with them, and return to the church of God. Let it be observed then, that the numbering and marshalling the Israelites (Num. i. 2.) may have an allusion to the government of a christian church. The strong in faith must lead the van; experience must close the rear. "Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey my son, thou art gone up," &c. &c. Gen. xlix. 9, 10, 11. "Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes: Dan shall be as a serpent in the way," &c. ib. 16, 17. Let none therefore rashly hurry themselves into offices in the church, without well considering what they are about; nor attempt things beyond their abilities and qualifications. Rather "strive to make your calling and election sure." Let every member in the church take their proper places and stations — Paul, who was so much qualified and owned as a preacher, left Titus in Crete to set things in order: the youth might be well acquainted with those

which were carried on against the Non-conformists and others, about that time. I know the former is generally laid upon the Dissenters, because it is said they murdered the king: but without entering upon that dispute, if the church of Eng. and Rome, lost a king, the cause of freedom, may I not say religion too, lost a Hamlden.

those matters ; though young in years, he might be old in experience: though little acquainted with the world, he might well understand religious discipline, and consequently might with propriety be left to settle those matters which Paul had left unfinished. And thus we see * Paul the aged, the old veteran, (if I may be allowed such an expression) leading the van, and beating up the head quarters of the enemy, while James and others wait at Jerusalem to regulate the affairs of the church, and instruct the new converts in their further enquiries : and as the camp is cleansed and purged from uncleanness, so must the church of God. 1 Tim. vi. 3, 4. Titus ii. 12, 13, 14. "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord:" but in doing this, sometimes the ministers or elders meet with much disturbance, even from their own friends, whilst others, who look too much upon their ministers, almost attempt to hinder the very working of the spirit of God in others, who appear to be called to the work of the ministry ; witness, when Eldad and Medad prophesied ; Joshua, though a chosen servant of God, feared lest the credit
of

* I would not be understood here, that Paul's services were more meritorious than others of the ministry, as in himself, nor do I think him less qualified to build up churches than Titus, or the others before-mentioned. Witness his epistle to that young minister. But want of experience of the world, might disqualify him for preaching amongst the unconverted in such an awakening manner.

of Moses should be lessened in the eyes of the people; but the humility of Moses taught him better. "Would to God (saith he) that all the Lord's people were prophets." On the other hand, Miriam and Aaron, contend with the man of God, and attempt to aggravate crimes, which undoubtedly were bitter to the good man years before; or perhaps construe things into crimes which he, for wise reasons, was permitted, or perhaps in a miraculous way, even constrained to do. See Chap. xi, xii. of Numbers.

HAVING followed the Israelites in their travels through the wilderness, near to the southern borders of Canaan, where, on account of their frequent rebellions and unbelief, the Lord permits them to spy out the land. — But, alas! see how human wisdom creeps in, and unbelief prevails. Some indeed said it is a good land, it floweth with milk and honey, and this (referring to the bunch of grapes) is the fruit of it. Num. xiii. 27. But there are giants in the way. Others raise an evil report of the good land. ver. 32. So it is with formal professors, who, notwithstanding they have accompanied the children of God thus far in their walk, yet they attempt to descry the heavenly Canaan by the eye of reason, and neglect to seek it by prayer and supplication. Therefore the Lord leaves them, as it is said in the
Acts

Acts of the Apostles. "Hearing ye shall hear and not understand." &c. And in Theſſalonians, "I will ſend them ſtrong deluſions, that they ſhall believe a lie, that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth." &c. And again, "a deceived heart hath turned him aſide." — When an ill report is thus raiſed of the good land, O! what a mourning it cauſes in the church; and though there be a Caleb, and a Joſhua left, who are kept by the power of God ‡, yet they begin to deſpiſe their advice, and almoſt threaten to ſtone them. — On the other hand, when the Iſraelite indeed, views by faith the heavenly land, and ſees nothing but Jordan between, his heart is raviſhed with the grapes of Eſchol, which are plucked by the hand of faith. Yet when we let carnal reaſon into our minds, when we diſcourſe with ſuch who are but almoſt chriſtians, when we grow negligent and the like, the Lord withdraws his preſence, our luſts appear like the ſons of Anak. The heavenly city ſeems walled up. — Doubts and diſcontents prevail in our own ſouls, and thoſe who are ſent to ſpy out the land, *i. e.* thoſe who make a great noiſe and contention about religious points, and opinions, lead us into errors; then, we like them, begin to weep and mourn; we repent that we ever began the chriſtian race. See Numb. xiv. And though

‡ 1 Pet. i. 5.

though Caleb and Joshua may urge to obedience, yet discontent for a while prevails, till the Lord, who is rich in mercy, appears in his tabernacle, and in a powerful manner speaks by his ministers, who, after much entreaty with God, are commissioned to lead them back into the wilderness, by the way of the Red Sea; which, as has been observed before, may have a two-fold sense. First, it may typify the wrath of God against sin: secondly, the blood of Christ as the only atonement. — So that after such offences, the minister ought to thunder the law, and not to smooth his discourses over to please the minds of men, but to deal faithfully and honestly, with a “Thus saith the Lord,” and “As truly as I live saith the Lord, &c. your carcases shall fall in this wilderness.” ver. 29. *i. e.* Thou must wander up and down in the wilderness of this world, for months and years to come, until those darling lusts (which are such foes to the soul, such giants in the way) are all consumed. And when applied to the church, those actual promoters of heresy, and errors which often rend and divide the church of God, and throw stumbling-blocks in the way of the weak. Those, so living and so dying, must, however charitably we judge, fall short of the promised land. — After pointing those things out in a faithful manner, undoubtedly some will be made sensible
of

of their folly, unbelief, and ingratitude: for it is said, ver. 39. "And the people mourned greatly;" (and like those Israelites) will be going up the mountain in their own strength. But here a faithful minister should be much upon his guard. "Go not up, for the Lord is not among you." ver. 42. O! think not to satisfy infinite justice by finite obedience; but look again to the Red Sea, the second sense alluded to of Christ's blood, where those inbred lusts must all be drowned, or the soul perish everlastingly.

CHAP. xv. Informs us of the wonderful condescension of God; how he begins afresh to reveal his will, and in a manner to renew his promise. "Speak," says he, "to the children of Israel, (ver. 2.) and say unto them, When ye be come into the land of your habitations, and will make an offering or a sacrifice, (read to ver. 22,) then if any have erred, the priest (ver. 25.) shall make an atonement, (26) and it shall be forgiven him." O! the infinite condescension and goodness of God; here are crimes innumerable, but pardons yet more abundant; yet in the midst of all the displays of his goodness, rebellion begins to rear it's head; the holy sabbaths of the Lord are prophaned, and his statutes set at nought. The hardened wretch goes

out and gathers sticks, while others are performing their morning devotions: (ver. 32.) but they that found him brought him to Moses and Aaron, and they put him in ward. “And the Lord said, He shall surely die, and all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp.”—Let this learn ministers to be faithful in their work: for though some professors get within sight of the promised land in notions, by keeping pace with others in pretended experience, which they learn as the parrot learns to chatter; yet covetousness will, one time or other, expose their conduct. Though old Simecia built him an house at Jerusalem, yet when his servants ran away, his covetous heart led him into the land of the Philistines, though it cost him his life.

CHAP. xvii. The budding of Aaron's rod may inform us of the usefulness of the minister. If he is one whom God has called to his work, no doubt but God will bless him, and make his rod to bud in the morning. It is delightful in the morning, after an evening lecture has been preached, to hear how the sermon has been blest. When one cries out under convictions; another sees his peace with God, through a Mediator; a third convinced of his backslidings, &c. &c. The labours of such ministers
will

will frequently be remembered by the people of God; they will be brought before the ark and the testimony. — “And for me also,” says St. Paul, “that utterance may be given unto me.” Eph. vi. 19. A faithful minister, thus in his duty, will find the Lord to smile upon him; a nearness to God will teach him more and more of his duty: and though at first, he may, in a great measure, have followed the advice of old and experienced ministers, and trod in their paths, yet now the Lord begins to lead him further into the mysteries of his revealed, and the knowledge of his own duty. Read the xviiith. Chapter. Here you see the Lord reveals himself to Aaron without the medium of Moses. Thus the Lord leads on his ministers as well as his people from one degree of grace to another, blessing their labours in the ministry. But, alas! the depravity of the heart is such, that if the Lord only leave them a while, pride will lift them up, and we begin to be proud of our own abilities. See Chap. xx. 10. And this the Lord wisely permits, to teach them to put a greater value upon Christ, and to shew, even ministers, their own inability.

It may be better to pass over the ashes of the red heifer, and the brazen serpent, (both pointing to Christ,) than to dwell any longer upon the types,

types, lest too many become tedious to the reader: Yet let it be observed, that whenever we murmur and repine at the dealings of God, he will certainly send leanness into our souls, and our brother Edom, *i. e.* our carnal relations, will, perhaps, be the first who shall refuse a helping hand, and condemn all our pretences as mere hypocrisy. ver. 20. Thus you see what trouble we are brought into through our sins. Cowardice follows, and, as we begin to doubt of the Lord's protection, we trust to other means, or perhaps endeavour to avoid, or neglect some particular precept which God has enjoined. As Moses, without any express command from God, supplicates a passage through Edom, fearing to wait for God's own time, as for the moving of the cloud to teach them the way: the Edomites, (however reasonable such a request was) refused to give them a passage; and God, to punish their cowardice, permitted Arad the Canaanite to fight against them, and to take some of them prisoners. Thus those enemies we are desirous of passing without fighting, give us battle before we expect, even when we are off our guard; and though they are not permitted to slay us, they take some of us prisoners, *i. e.* the precious promises of the gospel are wrested from us by the enemy of our souls, and we fall almost into despair.— But earnest prayer,

prayer, and solemn vows, from right principles, are always heard by God, and in his own good time will most certainly meet with an answer of peace. "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, though I fall, I shall arise." Micah, Chap. vii. 8. "Yea, she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets." ver. 10. These troubles being properly sanctified, lead us to a sense of our duty, and teach us a firmer reliance upon God. We leave all dependance upon our carnal friends, we pass by their borders, ver. 4. Chap. xxi. with the Red Sea in view, while we go on this our passage: but if we murmur by the way, the serpent will bite us, and we shall be again in a perishing state, until we have a fresh view of Christ upon the pole of the gospel. — O! how hard it is to believe when we are in darkness; we murmur and repine; and after the Lord has manifested his love to our souls, we are apt to grow spiritually proud; and, notwithstanding the goodness of God, it is hard in this weak state of flesh and blood to keep from either of the two extremes. — We may indeed have walked a long time in this wilderness of sin and sorrow; yet every day brings it's troubles with it, and every trouble, when sanctified, terminates for good to the christian. — O! what a number of out-ward

ward troubles does the christian meet with; but many more within. — Now he begins to know something of his own heart, now he begins to look inward. His heart, which sometime before he thought was entirely renewed, has often deceived him; and now the Lord is pleased (even when in the christian view he seems to be in sight of the promised land) to shew him some of his heart's sins, those besetting sins, mentioned in Heb. Chap. xii. ver. 1. — Now it is that Sihon and Og are permitted to fight against him, *i. e.* some inbred lust which the christian before was never able to discover, because, on account of the many outward troubles, he has already met with. — But now satan, the grand enemy of our souls, who knows too much of our hearts, is coming with dreadful roar; he sees how far the christian is advanced in the heavenly road, and knowing that now is the time to stop him, or never, he begins to bring fresh temptations, or rather, a new way of tempting the christian; he presents the dangerous road he has trod to his view; and knowing that the christian will not comply with sin, in it's own shape, he turns his thoughts to his good deeds; reflects how manfully he fought at this, and the other time, how bravely he stood against such and such a fierce temptation. **Revolving these things in his mind, the christian lets go**
his

his hold of Christ: the blessed spirit withdraws his presence, and leaves the soul to grapple awhile with his foe. Sihon king of Heshbon is coming forth against him, and the ministers of God are frequently proclaiming deliverance in the name of Christ; yet the private christian meets with a stout resistance, till the Lord, in some small degree, appears for, and promises deliverance to the soul. — But as Christ will begin in our hearts without a rival, and have the glory of our salvation ascribed to him alone, he permits the gigantic Og, the king of Bashan, to marshal all his forces to stop your passage; and here, perhaps, satan may be permitted to tempt the soul to despair, as has been before observed. Now it is the christian sees his inbred lusts and corruptions, in a manner he never saw them before; he sees how he has indulged some heart-sin, to the fulfilling of the lust of the flesh. But for the word of acquaintance with his own heart he has hitherto been a stranger to it. — Stop, O my soul, and view the monster in all it's hedious shapes. See how my heart, my head, my whole body, has been like the iron bedstead, devoted to his service, whereon he has lain and rioted, slumbered and even rejoiced, to the hurt of my conscience, to the wounding of my soul. — O, my God; what a wretch am I! how have I abused thy kindness, slighted thy reproofs, and set

at nought thy councils? "Search me, try me, see wherein there is wickedness in me, and lead me in the way of everlasting life." Psalm xxvi. and 139, last. — As the tempers of men differ as much as their faces one from another, so doth the experiences of the people of God, though all from one cause, they operate different ways, as for instance: one is carried away with the love of gold; and as christianity teaches us temperance, sobriety, and the like, this man too often falls into a covetous, avaricious temper, under colour of providing for his own house. — A second is carried away with a love of popularity, and though perhaps he has no desire to appear gay and great in the eyes of the world, he wishes the people of God to notice him, and often, too often, sets himself up as Jehu of old did, and says, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord of hosts." — A third is inclined to the lusts of the flesh, and when he thinks himself entirely out of danger, (or perhaps indulges himself in a negligent way of life for a time) suddenly a fierce temptation seizes upon him, and he falls, basely falls into the abominable sin of fornication or adultery. See those three temptations described by the apostle John, 1st Epistle, ii. 16. and illustrated by that sweet singer in our churches, Dr. Watts. Book ii. Hymn 101. I grant that those besetting sins do
not

not always lie concealed in the heart of all christians, till the latter part of life; they too often appear in their first setting out, but they are oftener observed by a friend, who watches over them for good; not with a censorious, but with a godly jealousy over their souls, before they are observed by the christian himself; and where a soul has been called out from an ungodly family, without the advantage of a christian education, they seldom appear, while in an advanced state of life, even at the very borders of the land of Canaan, as has been before observed, for the outward troubles such a soul meets with, generally keeps back those inward workings of the heart. — We have a notable instance of this in David, who, while he was persecuted by Saul, and fighting the Lord's battles, was continually singing and praying to God; but when his troubles abated, he grew indolent — sent Joab out to the war, and indulging himself at ease, he fell into the abominable sin of adultery; and to cover that, afterwards committed murder*.

ANOTHER

* Beware, O ye rakes! ye debauchees of the age! and think not to escape the vengeance due to your crimes, because you here see a favorite of heaven overtaken once in a long life, (otherwise replete with piety and virtue) contrast the difference between your conduct and his; see the heart-felt sorrow, the public shame, which attended his conviction. The family trials which succeeded one after, or rather, one

H 2

upon

ANOTHER trial the people of God are, in this advanced state, liable to fall into, comes from almost christians; and those perhaps may be represented under the character of Balak, and his wicked minister Balaam. Chap. xxii. xxiii, &c. Here observe the almost christian is a person who believes (in a sort) of the being and existence of God; as such he pretends to worship him. His method of worship is a mixture of revelation, tradition, and a great variety of human inventions jumbled together; of which, at times, he seems very tenacious, especially

upon the neck of another, and fell upon this otherwise holy man and his family. He, who had sent and taken the wife of another to his bed in private, has his own wives exposed in publick, by the impious advice of a faithless friend, to the insatiable and hellish lust of an undutiful and rebellious son. — He, who had slain the great Goliath, now waxes faint at the sight of Ishbenaoth, and can you think to escape the vengeance due to your crimes, whose whole lives have been a scene of debauchery and villany? — Conscience, though it now seems hardened to a degree of infidelity, will one day stare you in the face, and bring all your detestable crimes to light. Think how many once innocent, harmless maidens, have fell as victims to your unbounded lust; while virtue, honour, and happiness are your only pretensions. You have flattered and deceived, while you have brought many to publick shame, whose minds before their connections with you, were untainted with those abominable vices. But, alas! who can tell where unlawful pleasures will end? too, too many, like this of David's, in murder. Disappointed love, publick shame, and all their concomitant evils, uniting in one breast, are burdens too heavy for the tender feelings of a female mind, and often end in untimely death. — O, my God! what a scene of villany! Great Britain seems sinking under the weight of this enormous crime.

especially if it happens to be in a day when religion is courtly and fashionable. He hears that there is a sort of people in the neighbourhood, who differ from him in sentiment, that profess Jesus Christ, and declaim against human merit. At first he looks upon them with great disdain, and pleases himself with the thought that they will soon come to nought, and that warmth which they profess in their worship, is nothing but enthusiasm: but when he sees the christian hold out, and make an honourable profession, when he sees him overcoming every opposition through the strength of Christ, he then begins to tremble, like Balak of old; he says, "Now shall this company lick up all the dust that is about us." Numb. xxii. ver. 4. &c. &c. He sends for a Balaam to curse the people, who cries out the church is in danger, * and raises a mighty bustle. The furious bigot, who before was content to preach once a month, now sets up a seven-fold offering, and that upon the top of the mountain: the newspapers teem with his publications, and pretended good deeds. The true professors are compounded: Arians, Socinians and Deists, each act their part in opposing the
pure

* Perhaps no age in the church gives us a more striking picture of this than the latter end of queen Ann's reign, when that furious bigot Dr. Sechervill made such an uproar. . . .

pure word of truth, with Mr. Balaam at their head, whose rational notions of divinity stagger the minds of the ignorant and unwary, and seem, for a time, to cloud the doctrine of the gospel ; but as the rising sun dispels the gathering cloud, and clears the labouring sky, so does the gospel of Christ spread a divine light, and convinces these opposers of the reality of it's existence ; though it does not convert them. Hence, they begin to exclaim, "How shall I curse whom God hath blessed." See Chap. xxiii. 8, 9, 10. A spirit of catholicism now begins to take place, and professors of an itching ear, and wandering eye, frequently join with them in their worship, their feastings, and sometimes into family connections, to the hurt of their own souls, and disgrace of religion. See the remaining part of this Chapter.

I would by no means encourage a narrow contracted spirit amongst christians, yet I dare not set down every one for a christian who professes Christianity, and though I would never persecute any man for his religion, yet there are thousands in the world, that I dare not give the right hand of fellowship to, nor wish them to prosper in the name the Lord.

Be careful then, ye that are ministers and elders in
the

the churches of Christ. Hold frequent meetings for discipline, and number your congregations. Chap. xxvi. Be cautious in your admissions, and firm in your rejections. Let the honour of God be your study, and watch over the morals of your people, as well as into their notions of faith, otherwise you will but mock God in your pretended discipline and religious exercises. Now it is that the church is purged, the hypocrites are taken off, first by one judgement, then by another. The true christian's unbelieving fears are vanished, his unsanctified affections removed; and as the Israelites were put in possession of the conquered countries east of Jordan, before the whole army crossed the river; so the true christian, by faith, possesses a heaven in his own breast before death. And though all cannot boast of a faith of assurance, yet I believe all real christians can say they have a faith of reliance; remember it was but a small part who had their possession on the east side. Be not high minded then if you have enjoyed more of the divine favours than another, despise not your weak brother, but glorify God. Look back and see how graciously the Lord has dealt with you. Take a view of all your journeyings, Chap. xxxiii. ever since you run the christian race. See if it was under the leadings of God's spirit, and under the direction of his word; for these
never

never operate contrary to one another. Ascribe the glory to Christ: meditate upon the glories of a future state: see the extensiveness of it's borders, and the beauty of it's structure †. Give diligence to make your calling and your election sure. Let the females read the xxxvi th. chap. with gratitude and love, and take those spoken of there for their pattern. Thus let every christian be found in his duty following the example of Moses; read Deuteronomy as a rule of action, as a touchstone to see what use you make of the gospel of Christ, and as a mean of preserving you from Antinomian licentiousness.

LET aged ministers be careful what doctrine they preach, let them not cease to declare the whole counsel of God. Too many in our day take up with some one article, and preach up that to the neglect of many others. But we do not find Moses did thus. The book of Deuteronomy gives us a kind of epitomy of his whole ministry. See how he preaches free grace. Deuteronomy ix th. throughout. See how he thunders the law in another. xxix. 30. Perseverance in another, Chap. xxxiii. 27, 28, 29. the everlasting love of God to his people *. &c. &c.

† Compare Numbers xxxiv. with Revelation xxi, xxii.

* Though my subject naturally leads me to Deuteronomy, yet I hope none will think I mean to draw them from the more important part of the scriptures. No, let me hang upon

&c. Thus would I advise all aged ministers to take a view of their preaching. The work that God has done by their instrumentality, as knowing that in a short time they must give an account of their ministry. Happy will they be who do it with joy.

Thus having taken notice of most of the remarkable transactions which befel the Israelites in their journey from Egypt to Canaan, and the correspondence of the same, to the exercise of a christian's life; my next business is to take notice of the death of Moses, after an highly favoured view of the promised land.

HERE we see that the law is so holy, so just, and so good, that the strictest saint cannot fulfil it in every tittle; and consequently the followers of it, if they look no further, must fall short of happiness. Hence we see Moses taken off to make way for Joshua. Moses is indeed sought for, but cannot be found; so if a soul, at the borders of death, looks back upon his good works, there is not one that will bear the

upon the lips of my dying Saviour: let me read his sermon on the mount, where the law is so much honoured, and illustrated: let me close in with his invitation, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest:" let me view the sermons of Peter and Paul: in a word, let me take the whole scripture, as a chain in which every link has it's proper office, many mistakes having arisen by taking detached sentences of scripture only.

the test. He looks back and says, Not Moses, but Joshua, must lead me through the river of death: — I disown all my fancied merit; it is through Christ Jesus that I expect salvation: — away with all my own works. Hitherto the author hopes he has had some experience in what he has written, that he has been exercised with many of these trials here spoken of, and has been abundantly refreshed with the like consolation. — What remains must come entirely from the eye of faith, and from the experience of those who have already gone over the river, and left a testimony of their triumphs behind them. — I come then to the third Chapter of Joshua, and take a view of their passage over the river Jordan, (which all allow to be an emblem of death.) Here we see the priests bearing the ark of the Lord (according to Joshua's command) before the people. ver. 15. "And as they that bear the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, that the waters stood up upon an heap," &c. So it is with a soul at the approach of death. Notwithstanding he has so often cried out under troubles and difficulties, and longed for his dissolution; yet the sight of Jordan overflowing it's banks, makes the soul to shiver; till, by the eye of faith, he sees his high priest, Jesus Christ, enter the river before him,

him, holding up the ark of the testimony, the sweet promises of the gospel. Then it is the waters divide, and stand upon an heap. Awful indeed to the flesh; but while the soul has it's eye fixed upon Jesus, his faith prevails; he smiles * in the very agonies of death, and rejoices in the thought, that Christ has entered the boisterous waves before him. — But all do not pass over this river alike, no more than the Israelites. Those who have arrived to a full assurance of faith, most commonly (like the Reubenites and their brethren) march before, armed with the promises of God, they joyfully leave their wives † and children, their flocks and their herds behind them; while others, who have not arrived to this degree, seem to have them in their hearts all the way through. None can tell the agonies which some of the dear children of God have met with, on account of leaving their dear children behind them, to a merciless world.

Thus I have endeavoured, according to the ability which God has given me, to describe the nature

* I once had the happiness to attend a person in this situation: several friends being present, together with his wife and children, to whom he had just given his parting blessing, he breaks out as follows, "Here are my wife and children, my near and dear friends, whom I hope, and trust serve the Lord in fear; yet I can willingly leave them all for Jesus Christ."

† Jer. xlix. 11. Psm. lxxviii. 5,

ture of true conversion; the many temptations the soul is liable to during it's pilgrimage here, and the correspondency which there seems to be, between a true believer's experience, and the Journeyings of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan.

If the Father of mercies should be pleased to add his blessing to my weak labours, so that one soul be edified thereby, I desire that the glory may be ascribed to him.

GENESIS.



GENESIS. CHAP. XXVIII.

BEFORE we enter upon this important passage of scripture, it may be necessary to enquire into the cause of the journey Jacob was upon, when he met with this remarkable discovery of the mind and will of God to his soul.

IN the preceding Chapter we find that Jacob, by the advice of his mother, had imposed upon his dim-sighted father, and by fraud had obtained that blessing which God had promised him; and which he would have (undoubtedly) obtained in an honourable way, had he but waited in faith upon the promise of God. This had so far enraged his brother Esau, that he could no longer hide his resentment; but confidently affirmed, saying, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will I slay my brother Jacob." Ch. xxvii. 41. Rebecca being informed of this, called for Jacob, and told him of his danger; intimating that she designed to
send

send him to his uncle Laban, where he might safely wait a few days, till the anger of Esau was abated; promising Jacob, at the same time, to inform him as soon as ever this fortunate event should take place. Afterwards she goes to her husband, and tells him what sorrow it was to her to think of Esau's imprudence, in marrying contrary to their inclinations; and added, that if Jacob did so too, it would make her life a burden to her. Matters being settled between them, Isaac called for Jacob, as the Chapter sets it forth, and gave him a charge, touching the choice of a wife, confirms the blessing he had bestowed upon him before, notwithstanding it was obtained by fraud, and sends him away, probably with expectation of seeing him again in a short time. In this scripture we have two things which seem to strike my attention; first, the folly of parents discovering a fond partiality for some of their children more than to the others; and secondly, the sinfulness of Rebecca's conduct, in directing her son to deceive his father, even at the expence of truth; commanding him to tell a falsity to accomplish his end, and that, in the name of God too. See ver. 20. of the preceding Chapter. But it seems to me that the Lord, to shew his disapprobation of such a conduct, punished Rebecca with the loss of her favorite son; for I do not find that
ever

ever she saw him afterwards: nor will it be amiss if we consider the troubles which Jacob met with, as a rebuke to him, for his sinful compliance to his mother, in telling such a falsity at her request. — Esau having discovered that his father had confirmed the blessing, before given to Jacob, and that one principal reason was, because he had married contrary to the known principles of his father, by taking an idolatress to his wife, he attempts a kind of reformation of manners, and took a wife from the Ishmaelites, thinking thereby to appease his father by marrying into this family, she being a descendant of Abraham, by Hagar the Egyptian. This, though a plain matter of fact, may be considered as a true picture of the human heart, under legal convictions, and the common checks that wicked men feel in their consciences on account of sin: it frequently happens that wicked men, when visited by sickness, or some particular outward troubles, are under dreadful apprehensions on account of the punishment they believe they are liable to, as the just desert of sin; they begin to tremble for the consequences, but being unacquainted with the true spirituality of the law, and the insufficiency of the creature, they set about some trifling amendment, as they think; and like Esau, they take one new wife to their other two old ones, for the prayer of the

the wicked is an abomination to God, † and the hope of the hyppocrite shall perish. Thus those people only tremble at the consequences of sin, which they see will follow, and not at sin, as being displeasing to God: they never truly turn from their old sins, from the ground of the heart; but for a while abstain from them, as Esau did from his former wives; whilst at first, he was taken up with the company of the new. Let it therefore be observed, that a sincere and hearty repentance arises from a thorough conviction of our past conduct being displeasing to God, followed by a change in the whole * conduct, described in scripture by a new heart †, an utter forsaking of all our past sins, not only on account of the punishment due to our crimes, but from a principle of love to God; § not like to Esau, who never in the least disapproved of his own conduct for any other reason, but because it kept back his father's blessing. If any should wonder why a wicked person, as Esau seems to be, should be so desirous of obtaining his father's blessing; let it be observed, that in those days the eldest son was intitled to a double portion of the father's goods: but Esau, in a fit of intemperance and unbelief, had sold his birthright

to
 † Prov. xv. 8. * John iii. 3. 5, 6, 7. † Psal. li. 10.
 Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. § 1 Cor. xiii.

to Jacob: and it seems that the blessing here alluded to, may be considered as similar to a father's making his will with us: and further, at those times the patriarchs had generally been endued with a spirit of prophecy; so that while they bestowed their worldly goods, they generally foretold what would happen to their progeny in after times. This, I think, will easily account for this contest between those two brothers, and throw some light upon the passage, otherwise dark, and apparently trifling. Let us now return to Jacob on his journey, as described in ver. 10, &c. and here we have a striking picture of sin, and it's concomitant evils. Abraham had sent a servant with a numerous retinue, to espouse a wife to his son Isaac: a retinue perhaps larger than any prince in the eastern world, at that time, could send out without an aid from the subject, or a real hurt to his estate: but Jacob travelled the solitary desert alone. Having taken a dishonourable method to come at his father's blessing, he flies from the face of an angry brother, almost without the common necessaries of life; no doubt but he reflected upon his conduct, as he had offended the God of heaven, and brought reproach upon his family. It is natural to suppose, that something like this was the feelings of Jacob's mind; but how must his fears be increased, when he per-

K

ceives

ceives the night coming on, without the least prospect of arriving at any convenient place to refresh his weary limbs, or to alleviate the distresses of his troubled mind. The cold ground his bed, the stones his pillow, no covering to keep him from the midnight damps, but the canopy of the sky; he lays himself down, and pensively waits for the returning morn. But, O! the anxiety of mind, it is natural to suppose he felt, at his first lying down. What has my imprudence brought me to? I have been coveting to add my father's blessing to the purchase I made of my elder brother's birthright; but, alas! after all, I have indeed obtained it, but in a sinful way; I imposed upon my father, and that under colour of religion. See Chap. xxvii. 20. What good can I expect from it? though my father has looked over it, will God forgive me? What use have I made of all the wholesome advice bestowed upon me by my father, from time to time? I have enjoyed a religious education, it is true, but I have sinned like, or worse than an infidel. Will not God execute vengeance upon such a wretch as I? shall I not fall a prey to the wild beasts? is not the lion * roaring after his prey? do I not hear him ramping over the forest, or perhaps he lies concealed in the next thicket, and only waits a darker hour,

* Psal. civ. 20.

hour, to tear my weary body, and spill my blood †.

BE cautioned, O my young readers; live in love with your brothers and sisters, and do not seek by any unjust means to prejudice your parents against one another; use all honest means to improve your estates, and leave the disposal of them to God and your parents; it is honourable to advise when you come to years of maturity, but base to deceive. Some suppose that Jacob had travelled 40 miles that day, it is no wonder then that he fell asleep, though his mind was greatly agitated, as has been observed; * but a mind thus disturbed seldom enjoys a calm repose: thus the holy ghost has here intimated that Jacob rather dreamed than slept. “He dreamed,” says the holy historian, “and behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and, behold, the angels of God, ascending and descending upon it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord
God

† 1 Kings xlii. 24.

* If any wish to know why the author describes Jacob's horror of mind to be so great, let it be observed that though the scripture does not expressly mention it, yet it seems strongly to imply it; his dreaming being mentioned rather than sleeping, and his vow that he made after he had worshipped, intimating his wish to return again in peace, are strong enducements for our hypothesis.

God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be," &c. &c.

Here Jacob received a gracious discovery of the love of God to his soul, not only a pardon from this sin, which lay so heavy upon his mind, but an unbounded promise to him, and his seed a promise likewise, of the Messiah which should spring from his loins, who should bring salvation, not only to the Jews, but to the ends of the earth. O! the rich displays of his love, how does he manifest it to his sorrowful people? Some have went so far as to say, that Jacob was never converted till this time; but I see no reason for such a conclusion as this, for as we find, Jacob spent much of his time at home, attending upon the family affairs, so I cannot think but that the godly advice which he received from his father Isaac, had, by the blessing of God, long before this time, brought about his conversion. I rather think that a desire of obtaining a confirmation of the purchased birthright, by means of his father's blessing, was a means of hurrying him on to this rashness and backsliding; besides, if he had not been a converted man, he would hardly have been so uneasy, as it is apprehended he was, on account of so trifling a thing, as wordly-minded men suppose
dissembling

dissembling to be; though it should be done even in the name of God.

LET us now return from the true literal meaning of this wonderful vision, and see what use can be made of it in a spiritual sense. When a converted soul is brought into sin, through the force of temptation, the corrupt workings of his own heart; when God, his spiritual Father, is pleased to bring the law to his mind, in order to convince him of his folly, the soul is frequently put upon a kind of religious discipline, and sent away from the house of God, from time to time, under the hidings of God's face, he wanders in the wilderness of thought, from one stage to another, till at length, all covenant promises seem to vanish away; the Son of righteousness withdraws his presence and the lion of hell roars; the wounded conscience trembles, and says, I fear I shall fall by the hand of Saul.

HIS former sins stare him in the face, and Satan tempts him to despair; but in the midst of all this the true child of God acts faith, and like Abraham against † hope, believes in hope, and says with Job, "though thou slay me yet will I trust in thee." † He searches his ways, * and pleads with God by earnest prayer; he afflicts his soul, and, like Jacob, rather than

† Heb.

† Job.

* Psal. lxxvii. 6, 7, 8, &c.

than seek for a soft pillow to indulge his body, he takes the stones of the place, *i. e.* so far from saying with the Antinomians of our day, that the Lord's people cannot sin; he puts himself upon a severe search, "remember that the wages of sin is death," and though he knows that his own righteousness is as filthy rags, yet he knows that one sin, unrepented of, brings damnation. Thus exercised, the soul lies down (if I may be allowed the expression) in reflection and meditation, in some such language as this, saying, O Lord, I have offended against thy holy law, but thou art a merciful God, pardon me through Christ thy Son, and manifest that pardon to my soul, by the witnessing of thy holy spirit. If thou wert to execute judgement upon me, thou art just, and I must acknowledge the sentence right; but if thou display thy justice in the punishment of sin, how much more thy mercy in saving of sinners; the soul thus humbled is now in a proper frame to receive pardon, and knows how to ascribe the glory to free grace: now it is that God, in mercy is pleased, to manifest pardon, sometimes in an instantaneous way, at other times in a progressive way. Jacob is favoured with a sight of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, a beautiful emblem of the unity of the divine and human nature of Christ, who, as God, descended and came from heaven,

ven, as man from the womb of the virgin, forming thereby an intercourse with heaven, to us poor earthly-minded souls. By this ladder the angels (which watch over us for good,) descended to the shepherds, and published the glad tidings of a Saviour's birth; by this they ascend to the heavenly regions, and publish to immortal spirits the triumphs, and victories of a risen Saviour; by this they descend to our world, and defend the true christian from the powerful assaults of his grand infernal adversary, the devil and all his infernal hosts. *i. e.* That through the atonement and blood-shedding of Jesus Christ, God the Father can look down with pity upon a world of sinners, and receive them into his favour without receding in any degree from his justice; hence he receives them into his protection, and sends forth his angels for all the purposes before-mentioned: thus God sometimes by types, and sometimes by plain discoveries manifests his pardoning love to his seeking disconsolate souls, always remembering his promise, "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be;" and remember that if the children of God do not at first see into the meaning of his parables, they have only to ask for an explanation of the same; † but here God gets before-hand with Jacob, and stands at the top of the ladder,

† Matth. xiii. 36, 37.

ladder, pronouncing a blessing upon him and his seed, not because of Jacob's good deeds, but because he was the God of Abraham, the covenant God, who keepeth his promise for ever. "I will be with thee," saith the Lord, "and bring thee again into this land, for I will not leave thee," &c. and Jacob was afraid (see ver. 16, 17,) and said, "Surely this is the house of God, and the gate of heaven," and he vowed a vow, (see the remaining part of the Chap.) saying, "If God will be with me and keep me in all my ways, then shall the Lord be my God, and I will worship him in this place," &c. &c. Thus Jacob, who had years before received the promise, has a full confirmation of it from the mouth of God; let believers remember this, and take comfort; let them in all their troubles flee to God's house; for though, in time of old, God often appeared to his people in dreams and visions of the night, yet his word is now revealed, and his gospel preached, that we are not to expect such extraordinary visits as this, yet we may expect to meet with God in his ordinances, and such power attending the word, such drawings of his spirit, that makes us to say with Job, "I know that my redeemer liveth." Thus having endeavoured to make some remarks from this important passage of scripture, and endeavoured

voured to apply the state of a † backsliding soul to this of Jacob's, let it be the earnest enquiry of every one amongst us, how we have acted under convictions, as well as under backsliding frames, whether we have not, like Esau, went about a seeming reformation, and taken up with a few seeming moral duties, without examining into the reality of our conversion; let none deceive themselves; remember what Paul says, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap." Let backsliders be ware how they trifle away their time, lest God should cut them off in such a state. How dreadful it is to see professors in such darkness, living months and years without seeking after God's reconciled face, depending upon some trifling experiences at their first setting out, as they call it, though in fact, there is a doubt whether such ever set out in earnest after religion at all: our minds are naturally very fond of new things, and a hypocrite often makes

† I have been the more particular upon the state of a backslider than it is common in this age. While the Antinomian seems ship-wrecked upon the sands of licentiousness, the self-righteous Pharisee overlooks the tender mercies of God, and never appears willing to restore a fallen brother to communion again. Hence many zealous ministers, who appear anxious for the conversion of unbelievers, almost entirely neglect preaching to backsliders, forgetting the declaration of the prophet. "Turn ye backsliding children, for I am married unto you, saith the Lord." Compare Is. i. 18. and Ezek. xxxiv. 16. to Math. xi. 28.

makes a great noise when he first takes up with a profession of christianity; but, alas! their end is often deplorable: hast thou lost the witnessing spirit in thy bosom? fly to Christ, wrestle with him in prayer and supplication, plead his promises, and trust his word, but remember there is a wide difference between trusting in God, and presuming upon him, but what shall I say to those who never make any profession at all, or, at least, so little that it is not worth calling a profession: surely you only mock God in attending upon his ordinances, when you can go from the house of God and join with all your worldly companions, forget the serious truths you hear at the house of God, and perhaps turn them into ridicule. If Jacob could not bear to meet his angry brother, how can you expect to meet an angry God? May these considerations sink deep in your hearts, and teach you to fly from the wrath to come; remember that you have nothing to do yourself; the ladder, which represents Christ has it's foot upon the ground; you need not think of climbing part of the way by merit: no, no, "Christ is the way, the truth, and the light, no man cometh to the Father but by me."

5 0059



E R R A T A.

The Preface and Introduction.

P. L.

- 3. 6. *For There is, read And there is.*
- 5. 8. *For Adam's, read Adam.*
- 6. 23. *For views, read vices.*
- 7. 13. *For city, read cities.*
- ib. 19. *For the, read their.*
- 8. 18. *For perhaps, read but perhaps.*

The Work.

- 37. 12. *After revealed insert will.*
- 38. 15. *For as, read or.*
- 41. 9. *For begin, read reign.*
- ib. 18. *For word, read want.*
- 45. 23. *For compounded, read lampooned.*

50059

